

BUSINESS EYE

Achieve the objective

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This week's column offers proof that I have no life and spend far too much time thinking about things that don't matter to most people.

I have been observing the impact a great project manager has on others. Project management revolves around trust, while at the same time not trusting too much.

If, for example, you get to organise a special birthday party, or you pick up management of an important project at work, it is a statement of

trust in you, a hope that you won't let others down, and a belief that you can do the job justice.

There are the components of project management that everyone knows about, like making sure the objectives are clear.

Put together a 25th birthday bash for 40 Millennials, and the objectives are for everyone to have a fabulous, memorable moment, to minimise damage while avoiding illness, and for the birthday girl to feel so loved that she might shed a tear of joy.

You have the plan, the inevitable Gant chart that lists what needs to be done in what order and when for the project all to come together.

If you are producing a large direct mail campaign, it is no good starting the creative process too late and you probably need to reserve the paper in advance.

My observation, however, is that great project manage-

ment is more about people management, maintaining flexibility and being able to think on your feet than it is process control.

Let's face it, people are difficult and busy; me included.

Despite my best intentions, as the boss of a £10m rapidly changing business with over 200 strategic projects in flow and over 500,000 customers around the world, my days are busy. Stuff slips.

Promises are not always kept.

A weak project manager will try the easy route and look to remove someone like me from their project, but a great project manager will identify the pinch-point and actively upward-manage them to get the result.

The same thinking applies to the difficult aspects of the work. If you are all-in and passionate about taking the responsibility you have been given and blowing the doors off, you avoid a dabbling mind-

set and take full ownership of the challenge you are leading.

You don't side-step the difficult bits.

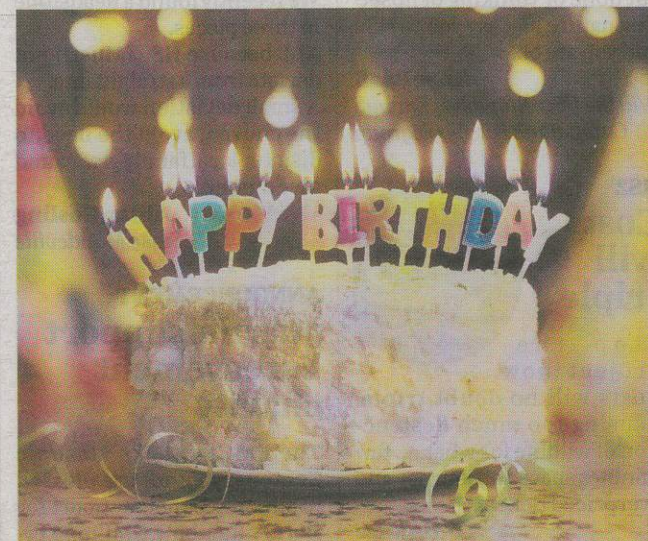
You identify them early and nail them down instead of leaving them looming large in the background.

If the objective needs a flower wall for photographs at the party, you work out early what on earth that is and get on to Amazon.

The component that I think is most often forgotten is the need for active and immersive thinking.

As Sun Tzu reminds us in The Art of War, 'In the midst of chaos, there is also opportunity' so it pays to be on your mettle and flexible when the rubber hits the road and to embrace change as inevitable, not troublesome.

When the birthday girl gets stressed over the location of a sofa you have positioned to protect the sound system wiring, you must convince them it isn't going to result in their



Project management has various strands, whether it's organising a party or an objective at work

friends not enjoying themselves.

It can be a thankless task, nobody else will know just how much it took out of you, the time and effort needed for communication with all parties drains the spirit of

the even most passionate, you are bound to feel taken for granted, and while people will thank you there is no greater joy than seeing that tear in the corner of her eye.

The pride is in achieving the objective.